

John N. Rhodes
A Yorkshire Painter
1809-1842







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JOHN N. RHODES,
A YORKSHIRE PAINTER.



Plate I. (Frontispiece)

PORTRAIT OF JOHN N. RHODES.



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JOHN N. RHODES,

A YORKSHIRE PAINTER,

1809-1842.

BY WILLIAM H. THORP,

Author of "An Architect's Sketch Book at Home and Abroad."



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PREFACE.

WITH the exception of one or two newspaper articles and other journalistic records which have appeared from time to time during the latter part of the past century, no serious attempt has yet been made to deal with the life and works of John N. Rhodes, whose drawings and paintings are to be met with in so many Yorkshire collections.

It seemed to me the time was opportune to bring together all the information obtainable relating to the life of this Yorkshire painter, and the works he produced during his brief artistic career. I only regret that this interesting task was not undertaken a few years earlier, when I should have been able to procure particulars from more than one friend and patron of the artist, who was then surviving.

Notwithstanding this drawback, details sufficient for my purpose have been met with. My chief source of information has been a literary sketch written by the late Mr. Fenteman, of Leeds, formerly a well-known bookseller and picture-dealer, who was well acquainted with Rhodes and sold many of his paintings for him. This has been supplemented by other facts given to me by relatives of the artist who are still living.

To give a general idea of the condition of the Fine Arts in Leeds at the time in which John N. Rhodes lived, his biography is preceded by a chapter devoted to this subject, which contains information relating to "The Northern Society for the Encouragement of the Fine Arts," whose periodical exhibitions held in the town during the early years of the Nineteenth Century created much interest.

Every facility has been given to me by the owners of Rhodes' drawings and paintings to examine his works in their collections, and in all cases when I have made the request, sketches and pictures for reproduction have kindly been lent for the purpose. Also let me acknowledge the services rendered by my friends in other ways in the preparation of this little work.

WILLIAM H. THORP.

Leeds,

Nov., 1904.

CHAPTER I.

SKETCH OF THE STATE OF THE FINE ARTS IN LEEDS AT THE BEGINNING OF THE NINETEENTH CEN- TURY, WITH SOME NOTICE OF THE EXHIBITIONS HELD BY "THE NORTHERN SOCIETY."

IN the early years of the nineteenth century, the old town of Leeds, noted for its manufactures of cloth, machinery, linen, and leather, and the commercial activity of its inhabitants, entered upon a fresh phase of progress. As its merchants acquired wealth they did not give themselves up entirely to the quest of the more material objects of life, but in many cases shewed a desire to cultivate the graces and refinements of existence, and amongst other objects, the Fine Arts came in for a share of attention. The conditions for the furtherance of this pursuit could hardly be considered favourable, the trades of the town, with little exception, did not demand much artistic ability on the part of the craftsmen employed, and there were but few patrons of the liberal arts to give encouragement to youthful talent or genius. Yet, if this were the case, it is interesting to note any exception to the general rule.

The staple trade of the town—the manufacture of cloth—did not give much scope to the artist or designer; but there was one industry, that of pottery, where more favourable conditions existed, and the Leeds Pottery, established at Hunslet in the year 1760, was still producing its excellent cream-coloured ware, for which it

had so well deserved a reputation. It is true that it had reached the summit of its success ten or fifteen years before the dawn of the nineteenth century, but its wares were still distinguished for their beauty of form and design, and the velvety quality of their glaze. It was not until the year 1818, when Mr. Hartley, to whom, with his partners the Greens, the success of the firm was so largely due, died, that it entered upon evil days, and the period of its prosperity came to an end.

Unlike the cathedral city of York, Leeds did not possess many valuable memorials of ancient times, either in architectural remains or artistic relics, nor were there many collections of pictures and art objects to be seen within its borders. Those who wished to gratify their tastes in the latter direction had to resort to the seats of the neighbouring nobility and county gentry. For such enthusiasts, Temple-Newsam, the seat of the Ingram family, with its fine gallery of paintings of the Italian, Spanish and Dutch Masters; Harewood House, with its family portraits by Reynolds, Hoppner and Jackson, its statuary and fine collection of china; Farnley Hall, with its Turners; and Bramham Park, containing Lely's portrait of Queen Anne and other valuable paintings, were the favoured places of pilgrimage. Nor must Nostell Priory, the seat of the Wynn family, be omitted, its collection including the celebrated picture of Sir Thomas More and family, said to be by Holbein, but considered by Dr. Waagen to be an early copy, and its authenticity also questioned by so competent a critic as Horace Walpole.

Amongst other collections was that of the Earl of Mexborough, of Methley Hall, the representative of the Saviles, whose family had intimate associations with the town of Leeds for a long period, and whose

arms were partially appropriated for the borough, the three owls which constitute the crest and supporters being borrowed for that purpose. Viscount Pollington, the representative of the family, was a director of loan exhibitions held in the town in the early years of the century, and his name was associated with those of Sir John Beckett and William Beckett as contributors of pictures and other works of art. The taste for art gradually spread and had its votaries. Many of the leading families, some of them of old descent, were not behindhand in their artistic appreciations, and if debarred from the possession of hereditary family portraits and notable "Old Masters," they did not hesitate to acquire such pictures of the Italian and Dutch schools as came within their notice—some of them copies it must be admitted—and, better still, they gave encouragement to contemporary painters of the day by adding examples of their skill to their collections; neither did they forget the practitioners of the craft who were working in their midst.

In the front rank of these collectors should be mentioned the family of Sheepshanks, who had amassed considerable wealth in the cloth trade, and whose representative, John Sheepshanks, gathered together a large number of pictures painted by his contemporaries who practised their art in the early days of the nineteenth century. Examples by Mulready, Leslie, William Collins, Turner, Constable, Stanfield, and others figure in his collection, which was afterwards transferred to London, where it was visited in 1851 by Dr. Waagen. It then numbered 226 examples, and was afterwards increased and eventually bequeathed to the nation, and now forms one of the principal attractions of the South Kensington Museum.

Concerning the names of other influential gentlemen in Leeds and the neighbourhood who wished to encourage a love of the fine arts, and who were desirous of fostering an appreciation of the beautiful and to bring before the notice of the public the work of contemporary painters, valuable information is to be obtained from the early records of a society called "The Northern Society for the Encouragement of the Fine Arts," which was founded and held its first exhibition in Leeds in the year 1809. The catalogue, which was printed by J. H. Leach, "Top of Market Place, Leeds," is prefaced by a somewhat stilted statement of the Northern Society's objects in bringing together a number of pictures for exhibition purposes, and an invitation to the public to come and see the result of its labours. This preface is dated 30th March, 1809, and is issued from the "Committee Room," Leeds.

To ensure the success of the exhibition, help and advice were solicited from the President of the Royal Academy, the chair at that time being occupied by Benjamin West, the favourite painter of George III. His patronage was not asked for in vain, and to show his interest in the newly founded Yorkshire Society he exhibited two pictures bearing the following titles: "Tobias bringing the Fish to his Father," and "Poetical Landscape with figures—The first interview between Calypso, Telemachus, and Mentor, on the seashore after the shipwreck."

Either at the time of this exhibition or of one held in a subsequent year, West addressed a letter to the President, Thomas Walker, and the Committee of the Northern Society, commending their efforts, and incorporating with it an address, rather Johnsonian in

language, and slightly reminiscent of the tone of the discourses of Sir Joshua Reynolds, his predecessor in the chair.* Commencing with congratulations to the Leeds Society for its enterprise in promoting a love of the fine arts, and in encouraging the painter's craft, the veteran, who has bequeathed to us the canvas depicting the "Death of General Wolfe," proceeds to make a special plea on behalf of historical painting, which, he complains, was neglected at the time and did not rise to the level of contemporary portraiture. He then refers to the glorious achievements of Greece and Italy, and to the works of the foreign schools, which were prized by men of taste of the wealthier English classes, whilst on the other hand, native talent, except in a few favoured cases, met with but scanty encouragement. Better it is, he maintains, to purchase good examples produced in our own islands, than to collect inferior pictures of foreign origin, many of them attributed to celebrated artists, and others merely poor copies of well known paintings. Not that he advocates a crusade against the "Old Masters," for he clearly states:—"No man, I assert, can place a higher value on the real works of all schools, or hold their names in higher respect than myself; nor is there anyone who would more earnestly desire to see them treasured in the cabinets of our gentlemen and nobles; but when spurious productions are imposed upon the liberal purchaser, to the exclusion and contempt of all real living merit, one is at a loss which to condemn the most, the knavery or the folly."

The cultivation of taste in the young he strongly recommends, hoping that the day is not far distant when a drawing master will be added to the staff of

* The letter appears in the Appendix.

every Grammar School in the kingdom. By this means, he considers, a taste will be inculcated, which will not only exercise an influence over the mechanic arts, adding a grace to the accompaniments of everyday life, but an interest will be aroused in the works produced by living artists who are dependent on the patronage bestowed upon them by their wealthier countrymen.

Encourage and foster the native art of the day! This desirable object is the burden of his discourse, which concludes with every good wish for the prosperity of the Society, and the furtherance of the Fine Arts.

The Northern Society, launched forth under such favourable auspices, did endeavour to realize some of the objects of its foundation. At its annual exhibitions it welcomed the work of the painters of the day, giving their work an opportunity of being seen by the public, and of meeting with a purchaser; and it also helped to diffuse a knowledge of the beautiful amongst the townspeople and the neighbouring gentry. It may claim to be the pioneer movement initiated in Leeds for artistic culture, which, although it spent itself after a number of years, prepared the way for other ventures and further enterprise; and a century later sees the city in possession of an Art Gallery with a valuable permanent collection of pictures, a flourishing School of Art, and the rudiments of drawing taught to every child within its borders.

Turning to the list of the original directors of the Northern Society, we meet with the names of representatives of Leeds families who were well known in their day and who took an active part in promoting the welfare of the town. A century witnesses many

changes, and in only too many cases the families who flourished a hundred years ago have either left the neighbourhood or died out, whilst the number of those whose descendants still survive is but small.

From one of the early catalogues we find that Thomas Walker was the president of the Society, and two other relatives, William and George Walker appear on the list of directors. To George Walker, we are indebted for his book on "*Yorkshire Costume*," published in 1814, which contains an interesting series of coloured plates, representing the characteristic clothing worn by the men and women of the period engaged in trade or rural occupations. It was then possible by his dress to tell with some exactitude the kind of work a man was engaged in, and it often was picturesque in character and lent itself readily to the pencil or brush of the artist; but now many of the typical costumes are things of the past, and the adoption of ready-made clothing has tended to reduce the work-a-day world to a dull uniformity of aspect. The illustrations were the work of George Walker himself, who "had a ready pencil and taste for colour." In 1885, when a reprint of the work was published, the original drawings from which the plates were taken were in the possession of Edward Hailstone, F.S.A., of Walton Hall.

The Treasurer of the Society was John Bischoff, and his brother Thomas was a director. They both were wealthy cloth merchants and liberal patrons of the fine arts. Bischoff built a late Georgian mansion of good architectural proportions and detail at the corner of North Street and Hartley Hill, which still survives modern street improvements, though unfortunately it is now partially hidden by some low shops

of mean appearance. A wing at the back of the house was occupied for some time by Joseph Rhodes, the painter, and his family, who thus were sheltered under the same roof as their friend and patron. A small picture of the kitchen, painted by Rhodes, belongs to Mr. J. Kidson, of Leeds, and gives a good idea of the comfortable interior and its occupants.

Following the name of the Lord Viscount Pollington, of Methley, we find that of Sir John Beckett, Bart., then venerable in years, a veteran who had done yeoman service for the town, and was for a lengthy period the principal partner in the Leeds Bank of Beckett, Blaydes and Co. He twice held the office of Mayor of Leeds, in 1775 and 1797, and was created a baronet in 1813. William and Christopher Beckett, both members of the same family, were associated with him in the management of the Society, and the interest manifested by them a century ago in objects of beauty, has been continued by their descendants to the present day.

The finest exhibition of pictures ever held in Leeds took place at the New Infirmary buildings in 1868, and its most active promoter and the chairman of its Executive Committee was William Beckett, who was then known by the name of William Beckett Denison. He lived to be present at the opening of the City Fine Art Gallery, in 1888. In more recent times his son, Mr. Ernest W. Beckett, M.P., has manifested his interest in contemporary sculpture by presenting to the nation two fine examples of the genius of Rodin, the sculptor, and his desire to encourage the artistic welfare of the town with which his family is so intimately associated was shewn by performing the opening ceremony of the new buildings of the Leeds School of Art.

Farnley Hall, the residence of the Fawkes family, has already been incidentally referred to as being celebrated for its collection of pictures, and at the early time of which we have been speaking, Walter Fawkes, the friend of J. M. W. Turner, R.A., was adding to it some notable examples of the work of this distinguished painter, who was at all times a welcome visitor at his Yorkshire residence. To this friendship, or resulting from it, we are indebted for the interesting series of water colours and paintings, some of them dealing with the typical scenery of the county of broad acres, which still adorn the walls of the Wharfedale mansion and attract numerous visitors who admire the work of the master of English landscape.

Both Walter Fawkes and Francis Hawkesworth Fawkes were members of the Committee of Management of the Northern Society, and doubtless owing to their influence Turner was induced to lend several of his paintings for exhibition, for we find in 1822 he had seven works for sale, and in 1823 he was represented by five pictures, all of them seascapes with shipping. Nelson's flagship appears in the series, its title in the catalogue being entered "Portrait of the Victory, in three positions, passing the Needles, Isle of Wight." At a much later date, in 1839, Francis Hawkesworth Fawkes was a large contributor to an exhibition held in the Music Hall, Albion Street, for the benefit of the Mechanics' Institution. Forty-two of Turner's drawings were at that time lent by him—the preface to the catalogue stating that he exhibited his "Unique collection of the finest works of J. M. W. Turner, R.A., who stands at the head of painters in water colours, and who has done far more than any other man to create that School of Art in England."

The fortunes of the family of Gott were closely interwoven with those of the town and trade of Leeds in the early days of the nineteenth century. The Northern Society was represented by three of its members—Benjamin, John, and William. They had a cloth manufactory at Bean Ing in Wellington Street, and all of them were energetic men of business, who devoted their leisure time to the encouragement of scientific research and the promotion of literary and artistic culture. In Benjamin Gott, the head of the family, the artists of the day had the good fortune to possess a liberal and discriminating friend. Sir Francis Chantrey, the celebrated sculptor, was numbered amongst his intimate associates, and he and his wife sat for their portraits to Sir Thomas Lawrence. These two pictures are excellent examples of the skill of the fashionable painter of the day, and it is interesting to record that they have recently been hung at the Winter Exhibition of the “Old Masters” at Burlington House, where the portrait of Benjamin Gott has won the highest praise from distinguished critics and connoisseurs. Interested also in science and literature, he was selected to lay the foundation stone of the Philosophical Hall in Park Row, in 1819. At that time he lived in the old mansion in Cookridge Street, recently used as a Priests’ House for St. Ann’s Cathedral; but he afterwards went to live at Armley House, where he formed a valuable collection of pictures and books, and harboured his various treasures.

William Gott also collected pictures, and was a liberal purchaser of the drawings of John N. Rhodes, the subject of this monograph, of whose works alone he possessed the large number of three hundred.

Plate II.

NOONDAY REST.



Amongst other supporters of the Society were the Blaydes, who at one time carried on an extensive business as cloth merchants, and are said to have acquired great wealth in Lydgate, but at the period of which we speak, they were associated in partnership with the Becketts at the Leeds Old Bank.

No record of Leeds would be complete without some mention of the Marshalls, who were engaged in the flax trade and employed a large number of work-people at their mills in Holbeck. In this case, again, three members of the family, John, John (junr.), and James Garth Marshall appear on the directorate.

To enumerate the names of all the leading townsmen who showed their appreciation of art by allying themselves with the Northern Society would prove tedious. Suffice it to say that divinity was represented by the Rev. Charles Clapham; law by Richard Ecroyd Payne; and medicine by James Williamson, M.D., William Hey, and Thomas Ikin.

Turning our attention to the painters who sent pictures for exhibition and helped to make the galleries at the Music Hall attractive to the art-loving public, it has already been mentioned that Benjamin West, the President of the Royal Academy, was represented at the first exhibition of the Society, and his example was followed by his successor in the chair, Sir Thomas Lawrence. Turner and his services to art in Yorkshire have already received some notice. Amongst other Members and Associates of the Royal Academy whose works were to be found on the walls from time to time we find the names of J. Opie, Thomas Stothard, Henry Raeburn, R. Smirke, W. Owen, Alfred E. Chalon, William Collins, and Thomas Uwins. Works of sculpture were shown by John Flaxman,

who, in 1811, forwarded a model of a monument proposed to be erected at Bradford.

In the same year the gifted young Nottingham artist, Richard Parkes Bonington, then a mere lad, exhibited four landscapes, the subjects taken from his native county. Associated with the scenery in two of them, buildings are introduced, views of Wollaton Hall, the old Elizabethan seat of the Middleton family, as seen from Nottingham Park. In the brief brilliant career which awaited him, he showed himself an accomplished draughtsman of buildings of architectural importance in Venice and elsewhere, thus following up his early interest in subjects of this class.

Occasionally to be noticed were the Hobbema-like landscapes of Patrick Nasmyth, and also some early pictures of Edwin Landseer, the celebrated Sir Edwin of later years, who exhibited characteristic paintings of animals, two of them indebted for their titles to lines from poems of Robert Burns.

It was only to be expected that the artists of Leeds should be adequately represented, and of these painters, the one whose work met with the most recognition, and who enjoyed the most lucrative connection was Charles H. Schwanfelder. At the first exhibition, out of a total number of 198 in the collection, he had twenty-four pictures hung, most of them landscapes, but including some paintings of animals, chiefly dogs and horses, for which he had a well deserved reputation. In subsequent years also, he was a large contributor to the annual exhibitions.

Charles Cope, of Carr Place, the father of C. W. Cope, R.A., a teacher of drawing and a pains-taking artist, was represented by ten pictures; but of more interest and of much higher quality were the

contributions of Julius Cæsar Ibbotson, then living at Masham, but who was a native of Churwell and was educated at a Quaker's School in Leeds. Ibbotson's pictures were much appreciated in Yorkshire, and met with a ready sale. Two of his more important subject paintings, representing scenes from Burns' poems, "Tam o' Shanter" and "Hallow E'en," should be familiar to the Leeds art-loving public, as they have been exhibited recently at the Fine Art Gallery in company with other pictures belonging to Mr. Fairfax Rhodes, and they formerly appeared on the walls of the New Infirmary in 1868. He is said to have derived his inspiration from Richard Wilson, but there is no doubt that in many of his rustic scenes he was largely influenced by his contemporary and friend, George Morland.

The Northern Society's exhibition of 1811 witnessed the advent of Joseph Rhodes, who is referred to in the *Leeds Mercury* for May 2nd of that year, in the following terms:—"We shall this week introduce to the notice of our amateur friends a young native artist, who, after several years' study at the Royal Academy, is come to reside among us, and who bids fair to become in time an ornament to the English School. This artist, Joseph Rhodes, has no less than twenty-two pictures in the Exhibition." The notice then proceeds to mention in terms of commendation several of his pictures, which were chiefly landscapes and rustic scenes.

There does not appear to have been an exhibition in 1812, but as a result of the financial success of the three preceding years, the Society presented the Artists' Benevolent Fund with a donation of twenty guineas.

Now follows an interregnum of ten years, during which period no exhibitions were held, or, if this assumption is incorrect, the writer has failed to meet with any record of them in the newspapers of the time. This lack of enterprise may have been owing to the unsettled state of affairs in the country, which was largely caused by the Napoleonic wars, and the trade depression which followed in their wake. It was therefore not until 1822 that the Society felt justified in making its next appearance in public, and there again Joseph Rhodes was largely represented, and his son, John Rhodes, then a boy of thirteen years of age, exhibited a pencil drawing of Kirkstall Abbey. Concerning the two Rhodes, father and son, and other lesser known Leeds painters who practised their art at the time, we shall have more to say in the succeeding chapter.

At this exhibition of 1822, architecture was represented by Anthony Salvin, of London, who contributed designs and paintings of old buildings; and foremost among the local men who were practising this art in Leeds and the surrounding country, and exhibited designs for churches and other buildings of importance, was Richard Dennis Chantrell, who was afterwards to rebuild the Parish Church in Kirkgate.

A successful exhibition was held in 1823, and the following year the Society varied its programme, and arranged a collection of ancient Masters, for which a Jan Steen was borrowed from the King, and a picture by Rubens lent by Sir Thomas Lawrence. This was the final effort of "The Northern Society for the encouragement of the Fine Arts." Supported at the outset by West, it was not neglected at the last by Lawrence. Leeds was thus greatly indebted to two

successive presidents of the Royal Academy for the sympathy they manifested in its efforts to create an interest in the work of the painter, the sculptor, and the architect.

CHAPTER II.

BIOGRAPHY OF JOHN N. RHODES, PRECEDED BY A
NOTICE OF THE LIFE AND CAREER OF HIS FATHER,
JOSEPH RHODES.

JOHN RHODES, who afterwards assumed the additional christian name of Nicholas, the talented son of Joseph Rhodes, a well-known Leeds artist, was born in London in the year 1809, shortly before his father's return to his native town in the West Riding of Yorkshire.

In artistic ability and perception, spontaneity and vigour of execution, John far surpassed his father, and on account of his superior attainments, and the position he acquired in the ranks of contemporary Yorkshire painters, he, rather than his parent, has been selected as the subject of this monograph. Heredity in this, as in so many other cases, supplemented by the fostering care and instruction of his father, played so important a part in the development of the son's natural talents, and the lives of both were so closely interwoven during his youth and early manhood, that no account of the life of John N. Rhodes would be complete without a sketch of the career of his father.

The early years of Joseph Rhodes, who was born in Leeds in 1782, were spent as an apprentice to a house painter and decorator in his native town, and his indentures completed, and a knowledge of his trade acquired, he removed to London, where he speedily found employment in the business house of a japanner. The art of japanning and varnishing after the manner

of the Japanese was then much in vogue, and for some time he was engaged upon designing ornament and painting decorations on cabinets and other articles of furniture, which were afterwards lacquered in the approved manner.

The night schools of the Royal Academy, then under the superintendence of West and Fuseli, offered inducements to the young artistic craftsman, and there he spent his evenings in study from the life and antique, and before he left he had obtained a thorough knowledge of the proportions and anatomy of the human figure. Such was the progress he made that we next hear of his being employed in the service of M. San Juse, a French decorative artist of some repute, upon the adornment of the mansions of the nobility. His leisure time was occupied in making designs for wood engravers, to be afterwards used for illustration purposes.

Copying pictures of the "Old Masters" for the dealers, for which there was then a considerable demand, next appears to have engaged his attention, and it was not long before this congenial occupation absorbed most of his energies. His application was rewarded by the attainment of great skill in this branch of work, and the masterpieces of Claude, Poussin, and other great artists, besides undergoing repetition at his hands, largely influenced the original landscape paintings which he afterwards produced.

The state of his wife's health, for he married in London, and it may be a secret longing to return to his native county and the town of his childhood, were responsible for his migration to the north; and once again settled in Leeds, he established an art school of repute and gave instruction in drawing and painting for a period of nearly forty years.

His appearance as an exhibitor at the rooms of the Northern Society in 1811, and the notice which his works attracted at the time, already alluded to in the preceding chapter, fix the date of his return to Leeds as either the early part of that year, or the latter part of the year preceding. Quiet and unassuming in disposition, devoted to the pursuit of his art, he not only gave efficient instruction to his pupils, but also produced year by year a large number of pictures in oil, water-colour, and tempera, which are to be met with in good collections in various parts of the country, but more especially in the county of York.

The repertoire of his art was extensive, and included topographical scenes in the northern and midland counties, landscapes with figures and cattle introduced, street scenes and examples of architecture, fruit and flowers, cottage interiors, portraits, *genre* and conversation pieces, an occasional flight into the domain of history, and numerous designs and decorative works. His landscapes and fruit and flower pieces were the most prized at the time, but all his work was characterized by conscientious care, and most of it attained a fair measure of excellence. He never, however, displayed the vigour and freedom of touch and handling of his material, nor employed the rich palette, which afterwards distinguished the work of his son.

He was fortunate in his pupils, and many of them achieved success in various branches of work. In portraiture, may be mentioned William Robinson, an artist noted for his sense of colour, who for many years rendered valuable assistance to Sir Thomas Lawrence; William Frederick, described as "a chaste sweet painter of portraits, dead game, and small moonlights"; and Henry Smith, who followed up the

instruction given to him by several years' study in Italy. Francis William Topham was another talented pupil. He painted figure and general subjects in water colour with considerable ability, and his work is justly appreciated; and the list would be incomplete without the mention of Thomas Hartley Cromek, who devoted himself to the delineation in water-colour of ruins and architecture, for which he found many subjects during a prolonged residence in Rome.

Joseph Rhodes may be said to have anticipated in Leeds the art instruction afterwards carried on under the auspices of the South Kensington authorities, for he held evening classes for drawing from the round and antique, and to his night school came several young men, sons of the manufacturers and tradesmen of Leeds, to benefit by his instruction. Few of them purposed to take up art as a profession, but they pursued their studies as a means of self-improvement and culture. Several of them became accomplished amateurs, and by their influence helped to create a taste in the town for pictures and artistic things. The devotion shown to his vocation during an extended career, the recognition by his pupils of his sterling qualities, and the interest taken by the public in his paintings may be said to be responsible for the distinctive title given to Joseph Rhodes of "The Father of Art in Yorkshire."

In addition to his son John, he had two daughters, one of whom married an artist of the name of S. Massey, whose landscapes and flower-pieces were often to be seen at the Northern Society's exhibitions; and at the house of his son-in-law, in Grove Terrace, Camp Road, he died, in 1855, after a prolonged illness.

Although the work of Joseph Rhodes generally met with a ready sale, he did not, as a rule, obtain remunerative prices, and when he found his son, John, bent upon being a painter, he, knowing but too well the precarious nature of an artist's livelihood, did his utmost to dissuade him from his purpose. Of no avail, however, were his father's words of warning; a painter the boy would be, and nothing was allowed to stand in the way of the attainment of his object.

From his earliest years he had watched studies from nature, gradually revealing themselves on the canvases in his father's studio, and, pencil in hand, he was busy trying to copy them, and also indulging himself in tentative sketches of his own imagining. Full of enthusiasm, his industry was unceasing. Nothing would satisfy him unless he could accompany his parent in his rambles in search of subjects for his pencil and brush, and as the result of one of these expeditions we find him returning with a drawing of Kirkstall Abbey, which was accepted by the Hanging Committee of the Northern Society, and exhibited in the saloon of the Music Hall in 1822. He was then only thirteen, and at this early age was able to show something of his powers of draughtsmanship.

He was educated at a school kept by Jonathan Lockwood, the father of Charles Turner Lockwood, who bequeathed a number of paintings and drawings to the Leeds Art Gallery. There he was taught the ordinary branches of education common to English youth of the middle classes; but we may be safe in surmising that his thoughts were often elsewhere, and that he longed to be out in the country in the midst of his favourite scenes of rural life. Whether this were the case or no, it was not long before he was



Plate III.—FARM LAD ASLEEP.

able to control his own time. Indefatigable in the pursuit of his favourite occupation, he was up with the lark and off into the country, where he quickly met with material suited to his purpose. Homely material it was, but not the less adapted for portrayal when seen through the eyes of an artist. A drover with some cattle, a boy with a donkey, or some children at a cottage door, were all he required for his graphic sketches, which are instinct with life and masterly in execution.

The suburbs of Leeds, notwithstanding the disfiguring effects arising from its factories and engineering works, still retain much of their original natural beauty, but in the days of which we speak that beauty was largely unimpaired; the valley of the Aire was a delight to the eye, the river, a silvery stream winding its way through a richly wooded landscape, free from monotony, and charmingly diversified by hill and vale. Further afield was the valley of the Wharfe, with its still more picturesque sylvan beauty and its romantic associations; and, taking an easterly direction from home, a walk of a few miles would bring young Rhodes into the heart of the country dedicated to sport, the scene of the Bramham Moor Hunt.

Quick of observation, his eye would not fail to notice the hue of the huntsman's coat, and its value in the landscape. This note of red in the colour scheme, a complementary contrast to the greens of the landscape, an heritage from the painters of the Dutch School, and often adopted by English painters of the latter part of the eighteenth century, was often made use of by Rhodes to secure contrast and balance, and he was an adept in knowing just the position in the picture where it would tell with the best effect. Its value was

well-known to George Morland, with whom the Leeds painter had certain affinities which will afterwards claim some attention. It is referred to by George Dawe, R.A., in his biography of Morland, where he states:—“One of Morland’s principles was, that a portion of pure red should be introduced somewhere in the picture. Accordingly, his landscapes invariably contain a rustic with a red cloak, coat, or cap, accompanied by another with a blue jacket or petticoat. He also remarked that there should always be a touch of vermilion in the lips, though they should not be painted entirely with it.”

Returning from his day’s ramble in the country, the work of young Rhodes was not over. The night school conducted by his father claimed his attention. There he occupied a dual position, that of an assistant, and also of a pupil, bringing to his task a youthful way of looking at things, and a wonderful capacity for producing studies and sketches. In fact, so great was his facility and the rapidity with which he worked, that it is said that he was able to produce as many as twelve masterly studies in the course of a long winter’s evening. Before long, the fame of the young painter was noised abroad. A glance at his clever studies, full of character and verve, was sufficient for the initiated, who at once recognized his artistic gifts. To admire, was to acquire, and his drawings soon changed hands.

Among his companions and fellow students were several sons of leading townsmen, cloth merchants and manufacturers, who brought his work before the notice of their parents, and it soon attracted the attention of wealthy collectors and lovers of the art, among whom were numbered George Banks, William Gott, John Sheepshanks, and George Walker, of Killingbeck.

His early sketches were executed in pencil, crayon, Indian ink, burnt sienna, and also in pen and ink in imitation of etching; and the media of sepia and burnt sienna emphasized by means of the reed pen, he afterwards used with masterly and brilliant results. The latter are still valued most highly by connoisseurs, and by many are preferred to his more ambitious ventures in oil and water colour. No sooner, however, did he adopt the palette, than he shewed himself capable of handling colour with skill, breadth, and power. Like his contemporary Etty, he developed into a fine colourist, and made use of rich and vivid hues with no timid hand.

Records of his early manhood are not readily met with, and a narrative of events which add interest to the biographies of many other artists is not possible in this case, owing to dearth of material. It is known, however, that he continued to reside in Leeds until his twenty-fourth or twenty-fifth year, his life diversified by excursions into the picturesque districts of Yorkshire in search of subjects for his pencil and brush.

To a man of his temperament, the free and easy life of the country must have had great attractions. The disposition of the father was not reflected in that of the son. Joseph Rhodes was quiet and reserved in manner, and was careful, painstaking, and steady in his habits, whereas, on the other hand, John was easygoing, communicative, and quick to make friends: as a rule he was prolific with his work, but there were intervals when his brush was lying idle owing to his lack of sobriety. Indeed, he had the typical temperament of the artist, with its good points, its enthusiasms, and its bright ideals, but when not accompanied by a strong sense of duty, its corresponding weaknesses.

In common with Morland and Girtin, drink was his undoing; and had it not been for his indulgence in this destructive habit, he might have lived to an advanced age, instead of being cut off in the maturity of his career, just at the time when he had achieved a thorough mastery of his own particular style, and a prosperous future was awaiting him.

That he was conscious of the inroads on his constitution made by this lamentable weakness, was evident at the time, and known to some of his friends. He made several attempts at reform, but with indifferent success. Lapses of insobriety were succeeded by intervals of mental brightness and industry, lasting for a few weeks at a time, in which he would paint a picture of merit, but in the latter part of his life his capacity for production was seriously diminished.

In speaking of this frailty, without unduly extenuating his weakness, the day in which he lived and the circumstances of his environment must be borne in mind. We must remember the drinking habits of society in the early part of the nineteenth century, and the proneness to over-indulgence. We must also recollect the class of country people with whom Rhodes was brought in contact. His world had many similarities with that of Morland, although it was provincial, compared with the metropolitan one of the earlier painter. The society met with in his wanderings—the cattle drover, the farm-labourer, the stable lads, the alehouse tapster, gipsies, picturesque in their rags and tatters, and the free and easy intercourse with all sorts and conditions of men, naturally disposed him to a “Hail, fellow, well met” attitude in his intercourse with the world at large.



Plate IV.—LAD AND DONKEY.

In addition to his rustic models and acquaintances, Rhodes must have met and occasionally associated with his brother painters. With some who lived in Leeds, and more particularly with those who enjoyed his father's tuition, he was probably on familiar terms. Of these, Cromek, Topham, Frederick, and Robinson have already been referred to.

At the time when J. N. Rhodes exhibited his maiden effort at the Northern Society's Exhibition, Schwanfelder, who was a contemporary of his father, was represented by a large array of pictures. Did this well-known Leeds artist—who had more than a local reputation, and enjoyed the distinctive title of “Animal Painter to King George III.”—extend the hand of fellowship to the youthful genius? It would be interesting to know!

Schwanfelder painted horses and dogs, and was in demand for pictures of favourite winners of prize cups. Sporting scenes, the pursuit of the fox, grouse shooting, and other similar subjects were customary material for his brush. Rhodes also painted animals and occasional pictures of sport. Both of them painted landscapes and rural scenes. Groups of gipsies with the picturesque accompaniments of their encampments, their caravans, horses or donkeys grazing at liberty or tethered to an adjoining fence, dogs on the alert, and the tripod with its appetising *pot au feu* were favourite subjects of the two men.

A portrait of Schwanfelder, painted by himself, hangs in the Leeds Town Hall, and he received several commissions for portraiture from families in the neighbourhood. Rhodes, on the other hand, may have accomplished a portrait now and again, but he was more at home with the face and figure of a

country yokel or farm lad, and could not readily be prevailed upon to delineate on canvas the features of more distinguished persons.

Julius Cæsar Ibbetson, said by some to have been born at Churwell, in the vicinity of Leeds, and by others to have drawn his first breath at Masham, was an old man when Rhodes was a boy, and he died in 1817. Doubtless he met the boy's father at the Northern Society's exhibitions where he was usually well represented, and the qualities and characteristics of his work would be known to the young artist.

Ibbetson and George Morland had intimate associations with one another, and, although particulars of their friendship are not abundant, it appears from Nettleship's life of the latter that in one case, at any rate, they both worked upon the same picture, in which the landscape was put in by Ibbetson, and the figures by Morland. Yorkshire was not unknown to Morland, for he made some stay at Whitby and painted coast scenes in the neighbourhood. Whether he visited Leeds is not recorded, but it is stated on good authority that he and Joseph Rhodes met and were acquainted with one another. That being the case, the gifted animal painter, could he have foreseen the future, would have been interested in knowing that a Leeds boy, the son of his friend, was destined, among others, to carry on the practice common to himself of painting animals and scenes of rustic life. Whether the younger Rhodes was influenced to any large extent by works he may have seen by Morland we cannot definitely say. That the class of subjects selected by the older artist appealed to the younger, is, however, self-evident. In their mode of technique there is not much resemblance, Morland's being the more scholarly

of the two, and bearing evidence of more careful training. Their sense of colour also differed. That of Rhodes, as seen in most of his paintings in oil, was pitched in a much higher key than that of his predecessor, whose colour was generally lower in tone and usually pervaded by a note of silvery grey.

The Lockwood bequest of 1891 has put the Leeds Art Gallery in the possession of several pictures and drawings by the two Rhodes, and amongst other interesting and valuable examples from the same source are two landscapes by a little-known Yorkshire artist of the name of Thomas Burras. Thomas Burras was one of Joseph Rhodes' pupils who achieved success in his after life by painting subjects after the manner of his master, which are noticeable for some charm of colour and feeling. The son of his master and Burras would be well acquainted, and it is interesting to see the work of the two pupils in the Permanent Collection of the city in which they both spent their early days.

From this notice of some of the contemporaries of the two Rhodes we must return to the career of John, and the records of his life. We left him at the time of his early manhood, his training at the hands of his father completed, and embarking upon life on his own account.

During his residence in Leeds his facility for turning out sketches, drawings and paintings was phenomenal—to such an extent, in fact, that it was said the town was inundated by them. In addition to the works he sold to his wealthy patrons, he could always dispose of his extra output to a sympathetic dealer in the town, a bibliophile and antiquary, who had a corner shop in the narrow and picturesque Boar

Lane of those bygone days. There, in the windows, were to be seen exhibited week by week, a dozen or more studies, made in most cases direct from nature, and priced at a guinea a-piece. Many of these sketches, vivid in colour and dashing in execution, were painted on squares of millboard, in size varying from twelve by ten inches to ten by eight inches. Some of his more hasty performances he did not hesitate to call "pot boilers." Pot boilers they may have been, in the sense of a means of providing the necessary means of existence, but even the most rapid, and it may be careless impressions of landscapes or rural life were characterised by marked individuality.

Works of greater importance, showing more care, and more detailed in composition, ranging in price from two to five guineas, he often painted on panel, sixteen by twelve inches being an average size.

They represented such scenes as the following :—

"The Woodcutter's Return."—The woodman, laden with firewood, returning from his day's work, accompanied by two of his children.

"The Sportsman."—A man on a duck-shooting expedition, with his favourite dog, in a rainy November landscape with drenched willows blown by the wind, seen against a grey cloudy sky.

"Children catching butterflies."

"Dinner-time." Boy seated at his mid-day meal, his dog at his feet, in a rock-strewn moorland landscape.

"Boy asleep under a haystack."

"An orphan boy and girl begging at the door of a cottage."

The title "Sheep in a landscape" was often adopted by Rhodes for his numerous studies in which sheep were depicted. He was extremely skilful in



Plate V.—THE GLEANER.

drawing these animals and grouping them in the most life-like manner; and whatever the medium he used, whether pencil, pen and wash, water colour, or oil, they are nearly always admirable.

Curiously enough, one of his pictures was called "Robert Burns seated under a tree." Whether this was the artist's name for his subject, or whether it was given to it by one of its later owners does not transpire. Certain it is, that it could not have been sketched from the life, as the Ayrshire poet died before J. N. Rhodes was born. This picture was for many years the property of the late Mr. John Rhodes, a well-known Leeds connoisseur, who, however, was in no way related to the painter, and who had a fine collection of pictures, including several good examples of the work of both Joseph and J. N. Rhodes, which he bequeathed to his son, Mr. Fairfax Rhodes, of Brockhampton Park, Gloucestershire.

A portrait of Burns also appears in the catalogue of pictures exhibited in the old Music Hall in 1845. In this case, it was the property of John Hold, who also possessed other examples of the art of J. N. Rhodes, and who was evidently a lover of his work. Robert Burns, the poet of the countryside and of rustic life, must have appealed to Rhodes the painter of similar scenes and incidents, and finding a suitable model in an appropriate environment, he may have named him after his favourite author.

A knowledge of Burns after the flesh being an impossibility, Rhodes struck up an acquaintance with another writer of verses, John Nicholson, a fellow Yorkshireman, known by the name of "The Airedale Poet," whom he met in his wanderings, and whose irregular habits matched corresponding ones of his own.

The author of "Airedale and other poems," "The Poacher," and a drama called "The Siege of Bradford," was patronised by the Earl of Harewood and Lord Ribblesdale, and was received at their mansions as a welcome guest, his amusing conversation and facility for impromptu verse-making, rendering him a lively addition to the company.

At the age of twenty-five or twenty-six, Rhodes had reached such a standard of excellence in his work, that almost everything which passed through his hands from that time onwards to the date of his premature death, is of interest to us, and shews what he was able to produce in the maturity of his powers. As early even as 1830, when he was just of age, he was capable of turning out pencil studies of figures, so admirably drawn and of such excellent quality, that in comparing them with some of Morland's sketches of farmyard rustics, they do not materially suffer in juxtaposition. At this period he may have been living with his father, who, as before mentioned, occupied for some years the back premises of the fine stone mansion of the Bischoffs, in North Street.

Following his residence in Leeds, it is said that John spent some time in Wakefield, where he found a patron in Mr. Stephenson, of Newstead Hall, near that city, who was a liberal purchaser of his pictures, and the owner of about fifty examples, chiefly in oils, some seventy years ago. More recent information makes it appear that he never permanently lived at Wakefield, but was in the habit of paying extended visits to a well-to-do aunt who resided at Alverthorpe, in the vicinity of the city, and whilst there, made the acquaintance of some of the gentry in the neighbourhood, to whom he disposed of his paintings.

Plate VI.

TURNED OUT.



After a time he married, but the union was not a happy one, and need not claim further attention. There were no children, and his wife lived to survive him.

He next made his headquarters at Skipton, which was a good centre for his country studies, and many of his mature works were painted at this time. Whilst residing there he was in the habit of frequenting the shop of an old barber, noted for his racy conversation and fund of anecdote, who had a son who afterwards achieved distinction, and was rewarded with the title of Lord St. Leonards. At Skipton, it is supposed, he picked up a rustic of the name of "Billy Wade," who proved a most useful model, and whom he painted in various attitudes.* This long-legged country lad appears in two or three of his most spirited sketches, and when we afterwards come to consider the work of the painter more intimately from the critical standpoint, in the succeeding chapter, he will receive further attention.

Rhodes was thus at this time in the heart of a grazing country, and there he would meet drovers with cattle and flocks of sheep, boys and dogs in attendance, on their way to market. The title, "Boy with Sheep," appears over and over again in the catalogues of his exhibited works. It is occasionally varied by the alteration, "Sheep in a Landscape"; and "Landscape with Cattle" is another familiar, but not quite so common, designation.

From Skipton to Barden and Bolton, into the midst of beautiful and romantic scenery, is not a long journey, and in one of the wooded dells he may have met with the subject of his charming drawing in sepia,

* See Plate II.

known by the name of "The Deer's Rendezvous," the record of one of his day's work in the year 1837. Neither were Ilkley and Rombalds Moor far away, and sketches of the bleak, wild moorland scenery so impressed his mind that several water-colours and an occasional oil-painting were the outcome of his rambles in the neighbourhood. A small water-colour, "Near Ilkley," in the Leeds Art Gallery, represents one of these scenes — a group of rocks in a wild moorland landscape, with a horse and pedestrians in the distance wending their way along a rough cart road which skirts the crag and vanishes over the crest of the hill.

An oil painting, formerly in the collection of the late John Rhodes and now in the possession of Mr. Thomas Winn, of Leeds, is another example of the scenery of Rombalds Moor, to which is imparted the addition of human interest. A country lad in corduroys is seated at the foot of one of the boulders with which the moorland is strewn, and is enjoying his noonday meal, his dog at his side keeping him company. Admitting that the dog is not quite so successful as some of his animals, the boy, on the other hand, is capitally drawn and painted, and the greyish green tones of the landscape are excellently rendered. The greyness of tone which appears to have been a characteristic of the atmospheric condition of things during Rhodes' residence in Skipton, and the prevalence of cloudy skies which influenced him almost imperceptibly and caused his paintings to become cold in colour, eventually led to his departure.

Did he tire of his country life, or was the market for his work in Yorkshire becoming exhausted? Did he think there was more chance of acquiring fame and fortune in the metropolis, than in a continued



Plate VII.—STUDY OF A DOG.

residence in the north? We do not know, but it may be that one or all of these reasons influenced him in coming to a decision to try his luck in London.

There we find him residing at 33, Sussex Street, in 1839, in which year he exhibited a picture, entitled "Sit up, Sirrah," at the British Institution. In the two following years he was living at Holloway, and he again was represented in the same building by two works under the titles of "Which is the tallest?" and "Horse and Donkey." In 1842 he appeared at the British Institution for the last time, contributing an important work, called "Going to the hayfield," its size being three feet three inches by two feet nine inches, a larger canvas than most of his usual pictures.

At the Royal Academy Rhodes only exhibited twice—a picture in 1841, called "The young bird," and another example in 1842, under the title of "Give it a bit of bread." His work is said to have been hung in some other London exhibitions, and to have attracted the attention of the press, who noticed it favourably, and did not withhold a fair measure of praise. It is, furthermore, stated that "his paintings, drawings, and pen etchings, were highly appreciated by collectors." In one quarter, at any rate, his work met with a ready sale, for the well-known publishers of prints and artistic literature, the Messrs. Ackerman, in the Strand, purchased from him all the sketches and drawings he did not otherwise dispose of.

A portrait of Rhodes is in existence, belonging to Mr. J. R. Pickering, of "The Beeches," Harehills Lane, Leeds, a nephew of the artist, which was painted by Joseph Rhodes, from memory, after his son's death. From it, we are able to form some impression of his appearance and characteristics. He

is pictured as a young man with decided features, dark hair, grey eyes, and rather sallow complexion. He is dressed in black, with a liberal expanse of shirt front, and wears an old-fashioned cravat of the period.

This portrait corroborates in many of its features a pencil drawing of the artist, in his early manhood, belonging to Dr. Abbott, of Aberford, which is described in a succeeding chapter.

A gradual deterioration in health, accompanied by an affection of the eyes, the former the result of his irregular habits, and the latter caused by the close study required for his work, interfered with his intention of making a permanent home in the south. His condition eventually became so serious that he found it necessary to return to Yorkshire, where he could receive the nursing and care from his relatives and friends that his case demanded. The change of air and scene proved beneficial for a time, but the good effects were not lasting, as his constitution was too seriously impaired to be permanently reinstated. He went to live in lodgings in the suburbs of Leeds, and was able after awhile to resume his work to some extent, and, notwithstanding the interruptions caused by illness, he made several drawings and painted one or two pictures, in which he displayed something of his old vigour and skill. He continued painting until the day before his decease, and just managed to finish an important work which was purchased by the late Thomas Eagland from Joseph Rhodes after his son's death. Dr. Eagland, of Harrogate, the present owner of the picture, has an autograph letter referring to it written by Joseph Rhodes, accompanied by a sketch of the subject. It reads as follows:—"The annexed sketch of a picture

painted by J. N. Rhodes was the last picture he ever finished, which was a day or two before his death—he worked upon it in my painting room under my own eye—it has never been out of my possession from that day to this, nor was ever offered to any person living till I mentioned it to Mr. Eagland, who purchased it of me August 17th, 1846.

“As witness my hand, Joseph Rhodes.”

“As a work of J. N. Rhodes, for depth of tone, harmony of colour, truth of character and poetick feeling, I consider it a very fine specimen.”

A fit of apoplexy was the immediate cause of the artist's death, which took place at a cottage in Harehills Lane, near Leeds, in 1842, when he had only attained the age of thirty-three.

For the last five years of his life, he had been producing work of admirable quality, including several pictures of importance in which his own individuality was strongly marked. He was on the threshold of a successful, if not brilliant career, and had additional years been granted to him, and those years been devoted to the steady pursuit of his art, it is probable that his name, instead of being practically unknown except in the town where he spent the greater part of his life, would have been handed down to later generations as one of the foremost painters of landscape and rustic scenes who flourished during the earlier half of the nineteenth century.

CHAPTER III.

THE ART OF JOHN N. RHODES.

THE artistic production of John N. Rhodes was comprehensive, and included work in a variety of methods:—pencil and crayon, pen and ink, monochrome drawings in Indian ink, sepia and burnt sienna, water-colour and oil. He often combined two of the vehicles mentioned, and added emphasis to his monochrome and water-colour drawings by the use of pen touches.

He was not equally fortunate in all the means he adopted to record impressions of rustic life and country scenes, and an endeavour will be made in considering the examples of his work, to shew where he achieved his successes, and also to point out any shortcomings which characterise other of his productions.

A pencil is the usual implement put into the hands of a boy who wishes to represent something which he has seen; and a pencil drawing, a sketch of Kirkstall Abbey, already referred to, was his first youthful effort considered sufficiently meritorious to be hung in the Northern Society's Exhibition. From this early success to his later days, he proved himself an adept in the use of this simple medium, and several of his authentic studies in pencil and crayon can still be studied, and reveal to us his masterly touch, and the intimate way in which he saw and represented his subjects.

The French artist, Watteau, splendid painter and colourist as he was, felt at his best when he was expressing himself by means of crayon, red and black; and although no attempt is made to compare for a



Plate VIII.—GIRL AT COTTAGE DOOR.

moment the homely Yorkshire painter with the brilliant creator of *fêtes galantes*, Rhodes had this quality in common with his illustrious predecessor, that in his case also, his drawings in pencil and crayon are worthy to rank equally with the more important and elaborate products of his brush.*

Some of his pencil sketches of farm lads and country folk, in the apparent ease with which they are drawn, and the knowledge they evidence of rustic character and attitude, extended even to the way in which their forms accommodate themselves to their roughly made clothing, recall to one's mind similar work by George Morland.† Like Morland they represent the bucolic type more often than not, at intervals of rest. As it has been observed, "All, or nearly all Morland's works are restful or lazy in subject," so in like manner the same description may be applied to those of Rhodes. The work of the day is generally either over or it is suspended for a time—the gleaners are returning from the cornfield, the woodman is trudging homewards from his work in the forest, a boy is asleep under a haycock, a dog is sitting up and begging for a scrap of meat, or a gipsy is resting by the way.

Where his studies represent action, the sense of movement is sometimes well conveyed, as may be seen in a partially finished oil sketch in the possession of Dr. Abbott, of Aberford, which represents a woman wading a stream; she is turning round and beckoning to a frightened-looking child to follow her. Of arrested motion, Mr. Gilbert Middleton's "Gleaner" ‡ is a capital example. In this little picture, noticeable for its fine colour, the easy posture and swing of the female figure is capitally indicated.

* See Plate III.

† See Plate IV.

‡ See Plate V.

Rhodes' pencil studies of rustic subjects are also very charming, and Mr. Richard Wilson has the good fortune to own several examples which are as clever as could be desired. The artist was fond of representing his figures with their backs turned to the spectator; another characteristic common to Morland, and in two or three of these drawings this treatment is to be noticed.

In more serious portraiture his pencil was also occasionally used. He made drawings of T. Babington Macaulay, afterwards Lord Macaulay, at the time he was Member of Parliament for Leeds, and also a drawing of Joshua Bower, Esq., a local worthy. They were both afterwards drawn on the stone by L. Haghe, and the lithographs were published by Day and Haghe, lithographers to the King. In speaking of these portraits, whilst admitting the skill with which the figures are drawn, and the clever shading of the heads, and the upper portions of the busts, it cannot be said that the facial expression in either case is altogether pleasing. Portraiture was not his *métier*. His drawings of peasants are excellent and lifelike, but when he came to represent more distinguished members of society, he in some way lacked the necessary inspiration.

On the other hand, his studies of animal life are admirable. His dogs and sheep he often sketched in pencil, adding a little shading and a slight tint to give an indication of the prevailing note of colour. An important oil painting entitled "Turned Out,"* the property of Mrs. L. Wedderburn, was exhibited in 1868 at the Leeds New Infirmary. It represents a dog of the terrier species, crouching down on the snow by the side of a door which denies him entrance. His

* See Plate VI.

pathetic eyes and woe-begone attitude are graphically rendered, and in looking at the canvas one feels that the artist had thoroughly entered into sympathy with his subject. What could be more expressive than the pitiful appearance of the poor animal! One can almost see his flesh creep with the searching cold and thawing snow. Rhodes knew how to paint snow, and in this case the slight bluish tone indicative of thaw is true to nature. The grey sheen on the dog's brown coat is also well rendered; and in like manner the old door with its bleached covering of paint is good in texture. A study of the same animal, but varying slightly from the attitude shewn in the finished picture, is owned by the writer. Here, the dog is drawn in red crayon in a bold sketchy manner, and it in no way loses the expressive character of the more highly elaborated work.*

Sepia or burnt sienna was the medium he usually employed for his sketches of sheep, combined with the use of the reed pen and brown ink, to give emphasis and piquancy to the general effect. Pencil and crayon studies of these timid animals are, however, also to be met with, and in all cases, whether in pencil or in monochrome, they reveal a thorough knowledge of the form and distinctive character of the species.

Now that Rhodes' monochrome work in burnt sienna and sepia has been mentioned, we are touching upon a branch of his output in which he was extremely successful, more successful in fact than when he made use of positive colour in his water colour drawings. For vigour, spontaneity, and the skill with which he seized the salient characteristics of his subjects, they are worthy in many instances to rank with the drawings

* See Plate VII.

of masters of established reputation, and are highly esteemed by connoisseurs. In looking at them, the thought occurs to one's mind—was Rhodes familiar with the drawings made by Turner for the *Liber Studiorum*, and with the mezzotinted plates themselves? The numbers of this publication appeared at irregular intervals from the year 1807 to 1819-20, and created a large amount of interest in artistic circles. During that period Turner paid several visits to his friend, Mr. Walter Fawkes, at Farnley Hall, and one of his most interesting plates, the "Crypt of Kirkstall Abbey," resulted from one of his Yorkshire journeys.

Taking into consideration the popularity of this series of prints, together with the knowledge of Turner's visits to the north, and the exhibition of his works from time to time on the walls of the Northern Society's galleries, it is extremely likely that Rhodes was acquainted with the important publication, and attempted after his own manner to obtain somewhat similar effects.

His general method may be described as follows:—A light wash of sepia or sienna was laid upon the paper on which he had sketched the general outline of his subject: it was afterwards worked upon with stronger similar colour with the brush, the lights were washed or rubbed out, and emphasis and crispness given, where required, by the reed pen and brown ink. In other cases he varied this method by omitting the preliminary wash of colour, and left his lights on the paper instead of washing them out afterwards.

In the Leeds Art Gallery an excellent example of this class of work is to be found under the title of "The Deer's Rendezvous." It is signed J. N. Rhodes, and dated 1837. This charming sketch, which has



Plate IX.—SHEEP IN LANDSCAPE.

already been noticed incidentally in the previous chapter, depicts a woodland glade with a group of deer seen through a vista of trees. The animals are on the alert, and their heads are turned in expectation of some disturbing influence which is likely to put them to flight.

But if anyone interested in Rhodes' work in sepia and sienna wishes to see a really good series of his drawings in monochrome, he should obtain leave to inspect the small collection of Mr. Samuel Ingham, of Headingley Hall, which has been selected with the greatest care. The examples—about twelve in number—are, almost without exception, picked specimens, executed during the years when the artist was at the maturity of his powers, and are thoroughly representative in subject and treatment. So clever are they, so masterly and vigorous, and so full of insight in revealing the life and changing aspects of the countryside, that he would be a bold man, who, after seeing these drawings, were to dispute Rhodes' claim to recognition as an artist of high rank.

Before passing on, let us consider a few of them. Taking them in order of execution, there are two little sienna drawings, neither of them signed nor dated, which on account of their comparative delicacy of workmanship may be safely attributed to his middle period. A Scotch lad in a moorland scene is the subject of one of them, and he is represented in highland tartan and bonnet, seated by a boulder with his dog at his side, in a bare looking landscape with a background of distant mountains. The other drawing has no title, but it may suitably be called "The Rainbow." A farm man is seen taking shelter under a tree during a heavy shower, and a rainbow indicates the

temporary nature of the downpour. Here the atmospheric effect of rain and sunny gleams is quite in the manner of Turner, and the distant landscape is indicated with true artistic insight. In both of these drawings pen-and-ink work is used with good effect.

In sepia, Rhodes made use of the warm and cold varieties of the colour, and seemed to know intuitively which of the two would suit his subject the best. "The Blind Man," signed and dated 1836, is a good example of the warmer colour with reed pen touches, and strikingly portrays the pathetic figure of an old bareheaded blind man accompanied by his dog, holding out his hand and feeling for the latch of his cottage door. Another specimen, later in date, is a drawing in which a girl of the "Little Red Riding Hood" type is introduced, but as here represented, she is hatless and hoodless. No wolf appears on the scene to make treacherous friendship, but she trips along a woodland roadway in happy confidence with no anticipation of danger, and a dog trotting by her side is present to protect her in case of need. The tree trunks crowned with thickly clustering foliage, which border the roadway, are drawn with knowledge, and add to the beauty of a really clever drawing. Clever also in drawing, and as a study in light and shade, is a sketch of a girl at a cottage door.*

Turning to his water-colours in the cooler shade of monochrome, we come across a characteristic study of sheep—animals which as already said he had the gift of representing on paper or canvas with verve and truth to nature. Of the two sheep which he has sketched, one is lying down and the other is standing; both are well modelled, and the texture of their woolly fleeces

* See Plate VIII.



Plate X.—LANDSCAPE.

is admirably rendered.* Of larger size, signed and dated 1838, is a pleasing picture in which a girl and a donkey appear in a landscape setting. The donkey has been liberated from the thatched shed or stable in the background, and is being fed out of the girl's apron, which she holds up before her. The figures and landscape surroundings are put in with much spirit, and bold reed pen touches help the general effect.

Another small picture executed by Rhodes two years afterwards is different in character, and represents him in a sympathetic attitude to certain aspects of nature not usually found in most of his work.† This little landscape, with its showery yet luminous sky, its wind-swept trees and stretch of meadow land across which a cart is slowly moving, is full of poetic feeling. It has something in common on the one hand with Constable, and on the other with the imaginative work of some of our modern landscape artists; and although one cannot say it recalls a Peppercorn, a MacLachlan, or a Macaulay Stevenson, it has some of the qualities which give a charm to their impressions of nature seen in its many varying moods.

Rhodes occasionally was content to draw with pen and ink only, to obtain results similar to those produced from the etched copper plate, without attempting to enhance the effects by a resort to washes of colour. In one or two of these drawings, so sharp and incisive is the pen work, that it requires the eye of an expert to determine whether they are impressions from the etched plate, or are executed in pen and ink.

An example is to be found in an interleaved illustration bound up with a valuable copy of Whitaker's "History of Leeds," together with his work on Loidis

* See Plate IX.

† See Plate X.

and Elmete, in the Leeds City Reference Library, which is also supplemented by several other drawings by Joseph and John N. Rhodes to which reference will afterwards be made. The drawing in question is a sketch of Robin Hood's Grave, Kirklees Park, and can only be described as a dainty bit of delicate work very finely executed. It is dated 1829, and bears a monogram signature which might apply either to Joseph or John Rhodes. It is, however, attributed to the latter, although it may possibly have been the work of his father.

A more characteristic and important drawing in which there appears to be no doubt as to the authorship is to be found in Mr. R. Wilson's Armley collection. It is a very clever pen and black ink drawing of "The Old Skyrack Oak," at Headingley, and is signed J. N. Rhodes delt. 1836.* The touch is nervous and delicate, and the work is full of character. It shows a thorough knowledge of the anatomy of tree form, and the silhouette of the bare branches seen against the sky is admirable—a study quite in the vein of Rembrandt. To add life and interest to the ancient landmark, a sheep is introduced into the picture, and is shown rubbing its head against the old tree trunk.

In the same collection is a capital study of a boy which would do no discredit to Morland, and is much bolder than the work just described.† The figure in the first instance has been sketched in pencil, and has afterwards been gone over with a reed or quill pen and red colour.

Mr. S. Ingham has a good carefully sketched black and white pen drawing, which is signed and dated 1836. A girl in a low-necked frock is seated in a high-backed

* See Plate XI.

† See Plate XII.



Plate XI.—THE SKYRACK OAK, HEADINGLEY.

chair engaged in nursing a baby, which, judging from the presence of a wooden cradle on rockers at her side, with its rumpled covers, suggests that it has only recently given up its occupant.

We now come to a consideration of Rhodes' water-colour drawings, and it may be well to mention at the outset that this examination is beset with some difficulties. In his earlier work, John was naturally very much influenced by his father, and repeated the older artistic methods and scheme of colour. Father and son often worked upon the same drawings. Many of them are not signed, and even when they bear a signature it cannot always be said to be authentic, and in many cases was doubtless affixed by the owner of the drawing. Again, both painters signed themselves from time to time "J. Rhodes," and it was not until John's boyhood was passed, that he made use of the additional initial N. to distinguish his pictures from those of his parent. An anecdote relating to his adoption of the second christian name of Nicholas, is still current in the family, and is said to have come about in this way—returning home one day, when a youth, he found a small chimney sweep, or "climbing boy," as he was formerly called, lying asleep on the kitchen hearth with his head reposing on a bag of soot. He was rather taken with the incident, and after sketching the boy he woke him and asked him his name. Nicholas, was the reply. In a whimsical mood he said, "Then I will call myself Nicholas, too," and thus what he uttered in jest he afterwards carried out in earnest.*

* Mr. Fenteman gives his second name as Norrison, and Nicholson has been adopted by others; but I have preferred to make use of the name given to me by surviving members of the family.

Returning to the question of the uncertainties of attribution, we meet with drawings ascribed to J. N. Rhodes and occasionally bearing his name, which to all appearances might reasonably be expected to have been produced by the senior artist. In the midst of these perplexities we are compelled to generalise, and to assume that in cases where the work is carefully finished, detailed, and rather laboured in manner, the drawings may safely be ascribed to Joseph Rhodes, and that where they betray more haste in execution, and a freer and looser method of drawing, they may be attributed to John. But even this rough and ready method of generalisation must be adopted with some reserve, and cannot always be relied upon. As it is not, however, contended that John N. Rhodes, except on rare occasions, appeared to anything like the same advantage in his water-colour work as he did in his drawings in sepia, burnt sienna and pen and ink, or in his later paintings in oil where his handiwork cannot be mistaken for that of his father, the difficulty of correct attribution need not unduly trouble the reader.

The characteristics of the early school of English water-colour painters are well-known. The earliest productions can only be described as tinted drawings—studies in monochrome for the most part, in which delineation of form and topographical accuracy were the principal considerations, and a sense of colour of merely secondary importance. In Rhodes' youth, water-colour art was only just beginning to free itself from those early conventions and restrictions which gave way largely owing to the influence of Turner, who at the dawn of the nineteenth century had left the neutral greys of his earlier years behind him, and was successfully striving to obtain a greater vigour of



Plate XII.—SKETCH OF COUNTRY LAD.

technique, a truer sense of atmosphere, and a richer and more varied colour effect. The older method of work was still adopted by many artists in the provinces, and several years elapsed before the modern conception of the possibilities of water-colour, initiated by Girtin and Turner, became at all general.

If we turn our attention to the early drawings attributed to John Rhodes, or bearing his signature executed under the influence of his father, we shall find they are noticeable for their adherence to the old formulas. They may be described as studies in monochrome, with little insistence on the value of local colour. Where colour is used, it is sobered down by shadows and under-washings of neutral grey or Indian ink, and a tone of lilac is adopted for the sky, and is carried through the whole of the picture, thus securing a delicate harmony of effect. To give emphasis to objects in the foreground, a resort is often made to pen touches in brown ink. After this manner is one of the earliest drawings attributed to John Rhodes, which represents the Old Shambles of the Middle Row, Leeds, which was demolished in 1825-6, a signed work; but the signature is of doubtful authenticity. This work, which is to be found inserted in the "History of Leeds" already referred to, appears on the whole to be too mature for a boy of sixteen, and may have been worked on by both father and son. The softness of execution which characterises the buildings and background is what we might expect from Joseph Rhodes, while on the other hand some figures and objects in the foreground, which are roughly and hastily put in, may be the handiwork of John.

Of more probable authenticity is a sketch of the Harewood Arms Inn, made at the time when the

building was in process of demolition. This drawing is outlined in black ink and washed in with colour. It is stiffer and bolder in character than the Old Shambles, and lacks the softness of the drawing first described; its colour is more positive and it looks tentative and immature. It is signed J. N. Rhodes, and in this case the signature has a genuine look, and corresponds in character with the autograph we are accustomed to see on his pictures of later years.

The Leeds Old Parish Church, dedicated to St. Peter, an ancient structure of the Perpendicular period, having fallen into a state of decay, was demolished in the year 1838, and chiefly owing to the exertions of the well-known Vicar, Dr. Hook, a new church was erected in its place from the designs of Robert Dennis Chantrell. It was deemed desirable to have some records of the old building, and a series of water-colour sketches was made by the two Rhodes, which has happily been preserved. There are six drawings—one exterior and five interiors. The exterior view is not signed, but is attributed (and probably correctly so) to Joseph Rhodes. It is a water-colour, carefully drawn, rather after the manner of a tinted print, with a highly finished sky, and is worked upon with the pen in both black and brown ink. The architecture is carefully delineated, and the perspective is fairly accurate and denotes painstaking study.

The five interiors represent—"The North Transept," "The Chancel (demolished 1838) from within the Altar rails," "Interior view from Chancel Arch," "Chancel during demolition, looking East," and another view of the east end of the church. All of these interior drawings are the work of the same artist, and although none of them are signed, they may with

some reservation be ascribed to John N. Rhodes. They lack the high finish of the exterior view, are stronger in colour, and are rather careless in drawing. They also betray haste in execution, and the perspective leaves something to be desired. Pen and ink in black and brown applied in a bold manner, is here again made use of to impart crispness and to accentuate the shadows. These sketches, notwithstanding their shortcomings, are especially interesting to us, for they convey a good impression of the picturesque interior of the ancient church, with the additions made to it by successive generations of worshippers. The walls were largely covered with memorial tablets and monuments; and hatchments displaying the arms of deceased worthies were hung aloft in the company of military trophies, banners, helmets, and pieces of armour. The floor was paved with gravestones and inlaid with ancient brasses. Cumbersome galleries overhung the western end and the north and south aisles of the nave; and to provide support for the timbers, the clustered piers of the arcades were cut about and mutilated. In the chancel, the sacarium was enclosed by a balustrade of polished wood; a screen of oak of Italian design with carved enrichments formed a background to the altar, and above it was placed a painting of the Last Supper, after Leonardo da Vinci.

Altogether, the building must have been a most interesting example of an unrestored parish church, and from an antiquarian point of view there is cause for regret that it should have had to give place to a more modern structure.

Kirkstall Abbey, the old home of the Cistercian brotherhood on the banks of the Aire, was the object of repeated visits by both of the artists, and there are

existing two series, if not more, of water-colour drawings made of the ruined monastery, from various points of view. Some of the sketches are much more highly finished than the others, which in the absence of signatures convey the impression that they may be the work of Joseph Rhodes. Most of the remainder are slight and tentative and are attributed to John. They are noticeable for a delicate sense of colour, which is also to be observed in two drawings of Harlaxton Hall, in Mr. Richard Wilson's collection.

Old buildings and examples of architecture were favourite subjects for the pencil and brush of both father and son, and numerous were the records they made of old country churches, and picturesque grey stone halls and farmhouses scattered about the Yorkshire countryside.

Of the more purely rustic scenes painted by John, where figures are added, something must be said. A nice little water-colour sketch in his later manner which is free from the monochrome treatment of his earlier work, is one of the exhibits of the Lockwood bequest in the Leeds Art Gallery. It is called "Asleep in the Hayfield," and represents a girl lying down at the side of a haystack. It is sketched in pencil, the colour is harmonious and cheerful without being unduly bright, and the tone is mellow and sunny. Compared with his oil sketches it may be regarded as rather stiff in manner, but notwithstanding this criticism, it is a pleasing bit of work.

In the same bequest are two other little companion pictures, entitled respectively "A Yorkshire Cottage," and "A Yorkshire Farmstead." In both cases the colour is nice and delicate, and is free from greyness of tone. In the former, the cottage is seen behind

Plate XIII.

CHILDREN GATHERING STICKS.



a hedge upon which clothes are hung to dry, and two children standing in the foreground add life to the picture. In the latter, a haystack built upon a platform to keep it dry, and propped up with poles, is the principal object of the composition. Figures are here again introduced in the foreground, the group consisting of a man standing with a spade in his hand, and a lad half seated and half reclining at his side.

Of much higher quality is a fine water-colour drawing, "Children gathering sticks," in Dr. Eagland's collection, which was executed during his best period, and is worthy to be placed by the side of his most successful paintings. It is a signed work, size twelve inches by sixteen, and is dated 1837.* Here he adopts a customary formula, and introduces a group of three children into a landscape setting. The central figure, a boy with red hair, wearing a crimson waist-coat thrown open at the neck, is kneeling down and binding sticks into a bundle. At one side, in the rear, another lad is standing with a stick or branch in his hand; and on the other, leaning against some wood palings, is a girl clad in a low-necked dress of the period, with a saffron-coloured skirt. A fine old oak with rich autumnal foliage and massive trunk, forms an effective background to the figures. Behind the boy in the rear, a grove of trees painted with sympathetic feeling in tones of bluish grey, recedes into the distance; and on the right, the distant landscape is rendered with true atmospheric effect; whilst overhead the sky is blue, gradually obscured as it reaches the horizon by light fleecy summer clouds.

* See Plate XIII.

This excellent drawing is an example of bold vigorous handling, and a fine use of rich warm colour in siennas, browns, and reds, such as we see in his pictures in oil. It is interesting to note that he produced this work the year after he painted the fine spirited oil sketch in the Leeds Art Gallery, "Resting by the Way."

Another water-colour of his best period, a drawing thirteen inches by eleven, of a child and a dog, the property of Mrs. Wedderburn of Moortown—a study in golden yellows, has qualities much in common with the picture just described, and rivals it in its feeling for fine mellow colour.

CHAPTER IV.

THE ART OF JOHN N. RHODES—*continued.*

THE paintings in oil produced by Rhodes, including sketches, small cabinet pictures, and larger works of more importance are of sufficient interest to receive special consideration. In working in this medium, his earlier pictures in common with the water-colour drawings of his youth, demonstrate in a noticeable manner the influence of his father, and are distinguished by careful drawing, pearly grey tones, and an absence of strong positive colour. In course of time he threw off the shackles of the convention in which he had been schooled, and with the adoption of a more varied palette he introduced rich bright colour into his compositions, and sometimes indulged in a riot of vivid hues, laid on with a full brush with no sparing hand, resulting in a fine fatty impasto.

Many of his smaller studies which bear evidence of having been done in the open, and are mostly painted on prepared millboards in size about twelve inches by ten or ten inches by eight, are not carried beyond the initial sketch stage, but notwithstanding this limitation they are in many cases clever and life-like impressions of rustic groups and bits of the country side. Of this character, and noticeable for their vitality, vigour

of execution, and richness of colour, are two little sketches called respectively "Crossing the Stream" and "Rustic Conversation," and in both of these small landscapes, figures are introduced with good effect.

In addition to Dr. Abbott's sketch of a "Woman wading a Brook," he is also the owner of another spirited little study of a gleaner returning from the harvest field, who carries some ears of corn held up in a red apron, and bears on her back a bundle slung round her neck; her face is shaded by a large broad-brimmed hat and a short dark blue skirt contrasts in colour with the rest of her costume.

Rhodes did not always leave these small studies unfinished, but from time to time whilst still retaining the impromptu character and spirit of the sketch he carried the work further and completed the little pictures. Of this class is a little picture belonging to Dr. Abbott called "Rustic Courtship," a capital study, not without humour, of a country lad who is supposed to be making love to a young woman who is seated near him. His attempts at courtship seem to have resolved themselves into mute satisfaction in the presence of his beloved, whilst his fingers are occupied in whittling a stick. She, on her part, to all appearance is satisfied with the situation, and is not inviting disappointment by expecting too much attention.* Another representative example is the small canvas "Resting by the Way," already mentioned, painted in 1836, bequeathed by Charles Turner Lockwood to the Leeds Art Gallery. Remarkable for its fine colour, it represents an overgrown country lad with ruddy cheeks, dark brown eyes, and unkempt straggling hair crowned by a broad brimmed hat. He wears a loose crimson

* See Plate XIV.

Plate XIV.

RUSTIC COURTSHIP.



jacket and it and the shirt below are thrown open, exposing the neck and chest. The painting of the jacket is of beautiful quality and colour. He is seated on a stone at the foot of a steep sandy bank of a warm yellow ochre tone, near a pool of water, and overhead a sky of deep cerulean blue contrasts admirably with the crimson and golden brown of the lad's clothing. The attitude of the figure is easy, good, and natural, but its scale is exaggerated, the body, limbs, and especially the legs, being large in proportion to the head, making the lad look unnaturally tall. The picture is an example of vigorous, easy handling, and is executed with dash and spirit. In richness of colour it is like a Rubens or an Etty, and although not remarkable for a delicate sense of atmosphere, the whole is well knit together and is pervaded by a mellow sunny glow.

A similar picture is owned by the author, which is painted from the same model, and may have been Billy Wade, the country rustic, who lived in the neighbourhood of Skipton, and whom Rhodes utilized for many of his figure studies. This little picture varies slightly from the work just described, but it exhibits the same easy mastery of handling and fine rich quality of colour.*

Pleasing in subject, and fine in colour, is a little painting belonging to Mr. F. H. Barr, of Headingley—its subject, a woodland glade in which two girls are wandering, possibly on a nutting expedition. The faces of both are shaded by straw hats of the shape made familiar to us by Morland, and the principal figure, carrying a large basket on her arm, is clad in a crimson dress, open at the throat and looped up over her dark blue skirt. Hung in the same room is a

* See Plate II.

small example of the work of William Collins, R.A.—a boy reclining on the ground with a dog at his side, which at a first glance might readily be taken for a painting by Rhodes. The subject, colour, and composition, are quite after the manner of the Leeds artist, and the difference lies in the higher finish that Collins has given to his work. To have the opportunity of comparing the characteristics of the two painters' work, and to note the points of resemblance is instructive, because it is known that Rhodes, at one point of his career, was largely influenced by William Collins, for whose work he had a great admiration.

In proof of this similarity, it may be stated that a connoisseur and collector of Rhodes' pictures, now deceased, who was acquainted with the artist and sometimes called upon him when he was at work in his studio, being in London and visiting a well known picture dealer, had his attention called to an attractive rustic scene, said to be an example of the work of William Collins. Something in the picture seemed familiar to the Yorkshire patron of the fine arts. Surely, the colour, technique and composition were known to him! The subject even, and its treatment, had he not seen it before, or could he possibly be mistaken? Not so—a closer examination convinced him that he was looking at a painting by John N. Rhodes, and this conviction became a certainty when the initials of the Leeds painter were discovered in a corner of the foreground. Here, therefore, was probably no isolated case in which the work of this comparatively speaking unknown artist, so far as the metropolis was concerned, was offered for sale under the name of a more distinguished painter; and there is every reason to suppose that his pictures have



Plate XV.—WOMAN LEADING DONKEYS.

in the past been sold, and may in the future meet with purchasers, credited with names other than that of the real author.

In addition to the small pictures in oil which have engaged our attention, Rhodes painted on a rather larger scale, and for works of the size of sixteen inches by twelve, or of somewhat similar dimensions, he often used wood panels. These, as has already been said, he carried further in execution than his smaller sketches, and completed more carefully. Supplementing those which have been mentioned in the previous chapter, the late Mr. Fenteman, in his sketch of the artist's life which appeared in one of the local newspapers several years ago, gives the titles or descriptions of many others, all of them dealing with scenes of country life. In the time which has since elapsed, many of them have changed hands, and owing to the deaths of former owners, collections have been dispersed.

One small, but valuable and representative collection made by the late T. Eagland, an enthusiastic admirer of the talent of his fellow townsman, and bequeathed to his son, Dr. W. H. Eagland, of Harrogate, still remains intact, and his pictures are worthy of an appreciative paragraph. In addition to the water-colour drawing already described—"Children gathering Sticks"—he possesses three small cabinet pictures of distinct merit, one of them marked by all the qualities of Rhodes' best work, and characterized by bold vigorous brushwork and fine colour. The picture in question represents a young woman leading two donkeys, one of them carrying panniers in which two children are seated.* The principal figure is of

* See Plate XV.

the gipsy type, with dark brown eyes and the brilliant port wine complexion which the artist was so fond of giving to his models. Her attire consists of a dark blue cloak, and a short red-brown skirt revealing her bare feet and ankles, which are well modelled and painted, and her head is protected by an old-fashioned bonnet of ample size. In one of her hands she carries a stick as she marches along with a determined expression of countenance. The two children in the panniers are very life-like. The nearer one with her back turned has a blue shawl thrown over her head and across her shoulders, and a crimson wrapper and white cloth hang over the side of the basket-work. The donkeys are capially drawn and painted, and additional animal life is introduced in the shape of a spaniel, which is lapping water from a shallow stream in the foreground. The canvas, which is thirteen and a half inches by sixteen, is neither signed nor dated, but it may safely be assumed to date from 1837 to 1840, and is very similar in character to Mr. J. B. Fraser's picture, "The Gipsy Mother," painted in 1840, which will be noticed later. Of the former, Dr. Eagland possesses a slight preliminary sketch in pen and brown wash, and similar pen and wash sketches on old letter paper of the subjects of two of his other pictures add to the interest attaching to them.

The title and subject of both of these paintings is "A Boy chasing a Butterfly," but their manner of execution varies considerably. One is an example of his earlier work in oils, when his technique still shews the influence of his father, and whilst carefully drawn and highly finished, it does not suffer from a lack of spontaneity. The boy, who is in full chase, wears low shoes and blue stockings, and, in his



Plate XVI.—BOY AND BUTTERFLY.

excitement and haste, one of his shoes has come off and is left behind. The pose of the running figure could not be improved upon, and the expression of eager anticipation of capture on the boy's face is excellently portrayed.*

The other picture, another rendering of a similar subject, exhibits the artist in his later, bolder, and more easy manner. Here, again, the action of the running figure is good, and the lad's clothing displays the painter's favourite colours of crimson, blue, and ruddy browns, in waistcoat, tie, and breeches.

Rhodes did not often make use of a large canvas, and his more important pictures of fair sized dimensions are limited in number. Of these, a painting of the Cowthorpe Oak, near Wetherby,† is a representative example. It is signed in red, J. N. Rhodes, Pinxt., 1840, and the canvas measures twenty-five inches by thirty. The old oak is depicted with its gnarled and hollow trunk, its spreading branches supported on props, some still retaining sap and life and others dead and decaying, seen against a dark thundery sky. It is the autumnal season of the year, and the foliage is changing colour from green to low-toned russet. To impart additional interest and give an idea of scale, a man is introduced in the foreground, whose back is turned to the spectator. Below the lower branches of the tree, on the one side, some cows are to be seen grazing in the distance, and on the other is a stretch of undulating country. As it approaches the horizon the sky is free from signs of storm, and is luminous in quality, with clouds tinged with a rosy evening glow. Distinct traces of the influence of Crome and Constable are to be seen in this picture, which is a

* See Plate XVI.

† See Plate XVII.

fine example of bold vigorous work. Another work of similar size to the foregoing, entitled "The Gipsy Mother," was painted in the same year.* The first record of its exhibition in Leeds was in 1843, when it was hung at the Music Hall in a collection gathered together to further the objects of the Mechanics' Institution and Literary Society, and its first owner was Mr. M. Cawood, a local amateur. It has been shown several times since, and has changed hands more than once, and is now the property of Mr. James Barlow Fraser, of Horsforth. This picture, which is painted with freedom and vigour and is notable for richness of colour and mellowness of tone, is considered by experts to be one of Rhodes' masterpieces.

The subject represents a gipsy woman seated on a mossy stone, nursing a child. A handkerchief thrown over her head partially conceals her raven black hair, her eyes are dark and lustrous, and her cheeks are flushed with the glow of health; her skirt is of bluish green cloth, and a crimson shawl of opulent colour is wrapped around her shoulders. By her knees, with her back turned, a child is standing with a stick in her hand, and not far away another is sleeping, cradled amidst the brushwood and bracken, with a dog lying down in the foreground. A donkey is eating herbage in the middle distance; beyond is the silvery glimmer of water, and further still, the distant landscape is faithfully rendered with true atmospheric effect. Behind the stone on which the woman is seated, another donkey and its foal are grouped, relieved by a background of trees which crown a knoll hard by, and broad-leaved plants of the dock variety are introduced

* See Plate XVIII.



Plate XVII.—THE COWTHORPE OAK.

in the foreground with good effect. The sky is luminous and is excellently painted. Blue overhead, it is gradually obscured by a filmy pinkish grey haze or cloud, merging into a pale amber glow, which extends to the horizon. The composition of the picture is good; the seated figure is happily placed, and the silhouette of the head outlined against the sky is effective. Praiseworthy also is the flesh painting. The gipsy's hands are well modelled and are painted in slight shadow with reflected lights, and the pearly shadows which veil her neck and bosom are the work of no novice. In colour, the picture leaves nothing to be desired. The greens are of fine quality without a suspicion of crudity, and are juicy and mellow in effect, looking as if they might afterwards have been toned down with a glaze of raw sienna. Taken altogether, this characteristic example of the painter's works fully merits the praise which has been awarded to it.

"Noon" is the title of a picture belonging to Mr. S. Ingham, of similar size to the foregoing, but in this case it is an upright instead of an oblong, and was painted two years earlier than "The Gipsy Mother." It is a warm summer day. Two hearty looking countrymen are depicted seated under a spreading beech tree, and resting after their midday meal. One of them, in full view, with a discarded dinner basket at his side and a little barrel of "home brewed" within easy reach, is holding up a scrap of meat at which a dog is jumping. The other is leaning against a fence with his back turned, and appears to be half asleep; his head, covered with a low crowned dark felt hat is bent forward, and across his broad shoulders luminous shadows are playing, as the breeze

rustles the leaves of the overhanging branches. In the clothing of the two men, Rhodes has made use of the three primaries—red, blue, and yellow, a device he often repeated with good effect, and these colours are here seen in knowing contrast in neckerchief, waistcoat, and trousers. The highest note of colour is usually centred in the waistcoat, which in the days of which we are speaking, as if to outrival the gay plumage of birds, was often faced with brilliantly dyed plush or velveteen, a bygone fashion which lingers on in some country districts, and is still occasionally to be met with. Returning to the picture, the greensward of the foreground is diversified by broad-leaved plants, and a shallow brook pursues its leisurely course below the rising ground on which the figures are seated. The sky is a summer blue, not too strong in colour, the greens of the foliage are toned into mellow harmony by the golden rays of the sun, and the lights and shadows are admirably rendered. The painting is in excellent condition, and if it was not for the tone which time alone can give, it might have left the painter's easel but yesterday.

Of equal interest is "Dinner Time,"* another picture belonging to the same owner, which, although neither signed nor dated, is a further example of the painter's best period. The canvas is upright. The scene presented to us is a common occurrence in everyday life—hunger must be appeased! A boy is seated at the roadside with a basin of soup in his lap, holding up a spoon to his mouth, with a dog, as usual, in attendance. Standing in close proximity, and watching the boy at his meal with evident interest, is a sturdy child whose age may be four or

* See Plate XIX.



Plate XVIII.—THE GIPSY MOTHER.

five years. Over a blue skirt he wears a man's waistcoat of voluminous size with red facings, and twisted round his neck is a muffler or handkerchief of the same bright colour. Blue, yellow, and russet-brown appear in the clothing of the older boy; here again we meet with the painter's use of the three primaries in the dresses of the two children. Behind the wayside group a cottage wall appears, which is overhung by branches, and the dark green foliage of the trees which rise above the wooden palings skirting the road, help to form a somewhat sombre background. The lighting of the picture is rather artificial, but the tone is excellent, and the painting broad and masterly.

Another picture of Rhodes' best period, composed of the simple elements which satisfied him, and which he was so fond of repeating, is to be seen at Elmet Hall, Roundhay, and belongs to Mrs. Hawthorn Kitson. The canvas, an upright, twenty-five inches by twenty-one and a half, is signed and dated 1838. The subject—a familiar one, is a country lad with his dog, in a landscape setting. With head uncovered and weather-beaten felt hat by his side, he is represented leaning against a low rocky bank at the turn of a winding road, which disappears in the distance behind a clump of wind-swept trees. The face of the rustic is more carefully modelled and finished than usual; his hair is brown, his cheeks bright in colour, and his eyes liquid and expressive; the pose of the figure is easy and natural. His clothes are a study in red and yellow browns, relieved by a touch of blue in his necktie. The general colouring of the foreground is of the tawny yellow hue which Rhodes so often affected, and this applies to the whole of the landscape.

The sky is a pale translucent blue, and is not so strongly painted as in some of the artist's pictures.

Of the four or five paintings which Mr. Fairfax Rhodes of Brockhampton Park still retains from the collection made by his father, the most important picture, which the latter considered was the best example of the painter's work, is entitled "Coming from the Hayfield." For many years it occupied a prominent position in Mr. John Rhodes' billiard room at his residence at Potternewton, near Leeds, and a short time before his death was seen by the writer and one or two of his friends, but his recollection of the picture is not sufficiently vivid to attempt a description which would do adequate justice to the merits of the work.

Careful enquiry has proved unsuccessful in tracing the present owners of three of Rhodes' later works, which he exhibited in London before returning to Leeds—entitled respectively "Sit up, Sirrah!" "Which is the Tallest," and "Give it a bit of Bread." The first was at one time the property of a Mr. Heywood, of Leeds, and was shewn at the Music Hall, in 1843, where it was hung on the same walls as the picture "Coming from the Hayfield," above referred to, which was lent at the time by Mr. John Rhodes.

In the chapter dealing with the biography of John N. Rhodes, a brief reference was made to the last picture which he painted, and which is now in the possession of Dr. Eagland, of Harrogate. It will be remembered that Joseph Rhodes in writing concerning it, spoke very highly of its merits. The picture—a moorland pasture with figures and cattle—is an important work, very carefully painted, with a highly finished sky, and a foreground of mossy greensward in place of his customary warm sienna and ochre



Plate XIX.—DINNER TIME.

tones. The cows which are introduced to the left of the picture, one a russet and white, and the other black and white in colour, are well grouped, and the drawing and painting of the first mentioned are excellent. To the right, standing erect, with her back turned to the spectator, and with one arm outstretched, pointing to the cattle, is a sturdy looking woman. A yellow shawl flung round her shoulders only partially covers her neck, the flesh tones of which contrast well with the tresses of her dark hair, which hang down on either side. She wears a skirt of purple brown, with an old-fashioned pocket or bag slung from her waist, and blue stockings and low shoes complete her attire. Slightly in the rear, a man sits, with a fair-haired child on his knee. He is dressed in country costume with rich tan-coloured trousers and leggings, and wears a blue jacket. A dog lying down completes the group.

Rhodes' flesh painting, as a rule, is rather hot and red in colour, and in the faces of his figures he was sometimes too apt to overstate the ruddy hue of health; but this case is one of the exceptions, and the colour is quiet and unobtrusive. The picture is pearly grey in tone, and has a nice feeling for atmosphere. In technique he has returned in some respects to his earlier manner, and the brushwork is not so sure, easy, and vigorous, as in his best work produced from 1835 to 1840. Notwithstanding these slight drawbacks, it is a painting of considerable merit, showing how the artist was able to rise above his bodily ailments and weakness, and to produce in his last work a picture, as his father expresses it, noticeable for "depth of tone, harmony of colour, truth of character, and poetick feeling."

With this description we must conclude the record of the life and works of John N. Rhodes.

For many years after his death in 1842, his drawings and paintings were treasured by connoisseurs and collectors in Yorkshire, and more especially so in the town where he spent the greater part of his life, but for some time past they have suffered from a partial eclipse, and have not met with so cordial an appreciation as they deserve. Compared with modern work, by some they may be considered old-fashioned, whilst on the other hand, they are hardly ancient enough to be looked upon in quite the same spirit, with which pictures of the old school of English landscape are regarded.

It may be, that a further period of time must elapse before they are treasured at their proper value, and it is with the hope of hastening the day of a true estimate of the merit of the productions of John N. Rhodes, that this sketch of his life and work has been written.

APPENDIX.

Letter from Benjamin West, President of the Royal Academy, to the President and Members of the Northern Society for the Encouragement of the Fine Arts.

TO

THOMAS WALKER, ESQ., PRESIDENT,
AND THE REST OF THE MEMBERS OF THE COMMITTEE OF THE NORTHERN SOCIETY FOR THE ENCOURAGEMENT OF THE FINE ARTS.

GENTLEMEN,

I have been honoured with your letter, explanatory of the designs of your Society for encouraging fine arts at Leeds; and it is gratifying to observe, that, by forming the plan which you have thought fit to communicate to me, you have opened the way to their cultivation in the North of England. Your zeal in cherishing the fine arts—the protection you offer them—are highly honourable to you, and I entertain no doubt, that, from the influence of your proceedings, the warmest desire of affording them the like protection will be diffused throughout other cities and other counties. London and Bath, already, have each their institution for augmenting and extending the spirit of patronage among those classes in which alone it can

be effectually beneficial; and the accession of your present undertaking reasonably induces the hope I have mentioned, that your joint examples may be followed by every city in the United Kingdoms.

Had such a spirit been sooner awakened, had patronage in the higher departments of art been more early extended to ingenious youths—to many of distinguished talents, whose ardour in study, and whose ability I have witnessed, passing before me for nearly half a century,—England would by this time have possessed men as eminent in historical painting as she now boasts in portraits, in the useful arts, in science, and philosophy; in all which her attainments so conspicuously exalt her above other nations.

Earnest even as you are, Gentlemen, in the prosecution of your laudable design, you have not perhaps contemplated to its full extent, the magnitude of those benefits to which your exertions lead. You are about to give to the rising generation, to the children of your and England's bosom, an opportunity of beholding, from their infancy, the works of living genius in their native country; the sight of which becoming habitually pleasing, cannot fail to inspire them with a love for these works, equal in force to the impressions of pleasure derived from them to their tender minds; for early habits bring on early affections, which remain with us through life.

Those early habits are one of the causes why whole communities, both in Greece and Italy, became emulous to cherish the fine arts among them; for their porticos, their temples, their churches, palaces, and dwellings, were the rich repositories of the enchanting powers of the arts, which, in those public resorts, were perpetually before the eyes of the youths

of all ranks. It is in no slight degree to be attributed to the want in this country of rooms and galleries, filled with the productions of its own living and native genius, that the love for the arts, and their consequent growth, has been retarded among us; and it is no less owing to such galleries having been filled and adorned with productions of pencils cherished in other nations, that the now senior portion of men of taste in the opulent classes of England, have imbibed from their infancy a predilection for the works of foreign schools.

Those works were the only productions of the pencil, of which, during their childhood, they perceived the possession to be coveted. The names of Michael Angelo, Raffaele, Correggio, and Titian, are become as familiar to them as those of their most intimate acquaintances; and where these names are annexed to pictures, both the beholder and the proprietor fancy that, in the presence of such works of superior art, they feel in their very atmosphere an undefined *something*, approaching to a divine exuberance of spirit, when perhaps, alas! in fact, neither Michael Angelo, Raffaele, Correggio, nor Titian, ever beheld those idolized works, nor are they even copies from the pencil of those justly admired painters.

No man, I assert, can place a higher value on the real works of the great masters of all schools, or hold their names in higher respect, than myself, nor is there anyone who would more earnestly desire to see them treasured in the cabinets of our gentlemen and nobles; but when spurious productions are imposed on the liberal purchaser, to the exclusion and contempt of real living merit, one is at a loss which to condemn the most, the knavery or the folly.

Had the communities of Greece, Italy, and Flanders, neglected to cherish the early progress of living talents, we should never have seen those splendid works which have immortalized at once the countries in which they were executed, the people who patronized, and the artists who produced them ; and I hope the period is not far distant, when a full knowledge of the effective aid which delineation gives to the other parts of education, will be the means of adding a drawing master to every grammar school in these kingdoms, that the youths who are educated in our schools may possess the advantage of the delineating powers, joined to their grammar education. This will not only give to such as may embrace the mechanic arts a superior skill and taste in all they do, but will render what they do more grateful to their employers.

The influence of taste, thus early ingrafted, and extending itself to all branches of manufactory, will meet the higher and more wealthy orders, whose accomplished minds will feel and relish the increase of elegance diffused over their domestic retirements. For never have the arts taken, nor ever *will* they take root in any country, until the people in that country generally feel and understand their constitutional excellence, and the refinement of domestic comforts which they spread around them. Had the patronage of those countries, where they have been principally cherished, rested solely with the leaders and conquerors, or with popes and princes ; had it not been accompanied by that which flowed from numerous individuals of rank and wealth, neither the porticos, the temples, the churches, nor the palaces and galleries of those countries, would ever have been so superbly

filled as they were; nor could those collections have been made from thence, which have filled so many galleries and cabinets elsewhere. The patronage then so generally dispensed was directed to the protection of living genius; and they, by whom it was so dispensed, sought to form no other collections than the works of native and living masters. This is the true basis of national eminence in the arts. On any other ground there can be no such thing as patronage; nothing else is worthy of that name. The encouragement, therefore, extended to the genius of a single living artist, though it may produce but one original work, adds more to the celebrity of a people, and is a higher proof of patriotic ardour, and a generous love for the progress of art, than all the collections that were ever made from the productions of other countries, and all the expenditures that were ever bestowed in making them.

I know of no people since the Greeks, who have indicated a higher promise to equal them in the refinement of the arts than the British nation; but this can only take place when the whole mass of the people shall be awake to the usefulness of the arts, and the splendour they confer. I have no doubt that every province of the United Kingdoms would then afford the means of cherishing them by exhibition and patronage, with the same pride that the Greeks filled their temples, or the Italians their churches, with works whose fame is now fixed for ever.

These are my sentiments, the result of observation founded on the unerring truth of experience; and I hold it not improper to have declared them to you on the present occasion, as your Society is about to take ground for patronage, of which it is so much to

be wished that the example may be diffused throughout his Majesty's dominions ; while it must also be observed, that the patronage held forth by many great and noble characters, needs no spur, and the means projected by other spirited individuals in opulent stations, for extending and perpetuating the works of British masters, fall short in no degree of the most fervid energies of private examples, of which any country has been able to boast.

I make no doubt but that it will be your study to keep alive such energies and examples of patronage, when your Society shall open its eyes to the public ; for patronage is to professional merit what the ocean is to the earth—the great source from whence it must ever be refreshed, and without whose renovating powers, conveyed through innumerable channels, everything must become dry, and all productions cease to exist.

With these sentiments, and with every good wish for the prosperity of your Society, and the extension of the Fine Arts,

I have the honour, etc.,

B. WEST.

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* *Erratum.* On page 33 *instead of* Ackerman, *read* Ackermann.

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